1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

[Medieval Georgia]

RELIGION

At the end of the seventeenth century, in Tiflis, Persian preparations to build a mosque could still arouse enough resentment to provoke a riot.[1]

A few of the rulers, particularly in Kartli and Kakheti, made some efforts to maintain their spiritual integrity in spite of adverse political conditions. The heroic Queen Ketevani of Kakheti, an elderly woman, suffered torture and execution in the Shah's prisons rather than abandon her faith, and King Wakhtang VI of Kartli preferred to relinquish his throne rather than conform outwardly—as many of his predecessors had done and his successors would do—to the Islamic creed. But amid the inconsequent but sturdy adherence of the peasantry to the faith of their fathers and their nation, and the courageous fidelity of an occasional ruler in the Georgian Kingdoms, the generality of the nobles and the priests led a spiritual life of irresponsible depravity.

Chardin, who bases his account upon personal observation and upon the manuscript made for him by Brother Zampi, a Théatin of Mantua who had lived for twenty years in Georgia, gives a lamentable account of the state of the Christian religion in Mingrelia.

> "The priests of Mingrelia", he says, "are very numerous; and a sort of miserable creature that live upon whatever they can get. . . . There needs no more than to be able to read and say a Mass by Heart, to be admitted into the Priesthood. . . . Nor is it to be imagined how the Priests are contemn'd and scorn'd. . . . Now that which

> causes this contempt is their ignorance their Gluttony and their Poverty. Their Poverty is so great that they go Barefoot, and in Tatters that hardly cover their Tails. . . . There are but few churches which have any Bells, but they call the people together by knocking with a good big Stick upon a Board. . . . The Parish Churches are more

[1] Chardin (1686), pp. 209–10.